Equity and Social Inclusion Plan
2011–15

Introduction

RMIT’s Strategic Plan, Transforming the Future, sets out a bold vision for RMIT’s activities over the next five years. The Strategic Plan confirms RMIT’s identity as a global university of technology and design, with a focus on being global, urban and connected in orientation and action. The Strategic Plan is underpinned by a number of enabling plans informing the structure and delivery of RMIT’s core business, including the Research and Innovation Plan, Academic Plan, Internationalisation Plan, Human Resources Plan, Information and Communication Technology Plan and the Equity and Social Inclusion Plan. Implementation plans and statements of the Equity and Social Inclusion Plan include the Disability Action Plan and Wurreker Plan, and RMIT’s Statement on Reconciliation. RMIT’s Student Charter, Statement on the Student Experience, and Transition Principles enact the commitments of these strategies and plans.

The Equity and Social Inclusion Plan frames priorities and actions that will advance RMIT’s deep commitment to equity and inclusion. This work is underpinned by strong and explicit partnerships and collaborations, internally and externally, that grow an inclusive and diverse culture for staff and students alike, informed by RMIT’s core values of being creative, connected, fair, passionate and committed to making a difference.

While equity and social inclusion is in the DNA of this University, there is still much that can be done, and new challenges in the contexts and communities in which we operate, to ensure that our workforce culture and educational delivery builds ladders of access, opportunity and success for students and staff from disadvantaged backgrounds, that our teaching, learning and management is inclusive, that numbers of Indigenous students and staff grow, and that Indigenous culture and knowledge is respected across the University.

This Equity and Social Inclusion Plan recognises our particular commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, articulated through the Statement on Reconciliation, Wurreker Implementation Plan and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan.

RMIT’s education and research are focused in technology and design transforming the future of peoples’ lives and urban environments. The focus of these fields is on action and experience with strong connection to and partnership with the professions and industries with which our students and staff will work. This cannot work without drawing on a diverse population of staff and students and recognising the global nature of the challenges and opportunities we face.

RMIT has an ongoing commitment to providing a fair and equitable workplace and learning environments that support all staff and students, which are inclusive of gender, age, culture, sexuality, ethnicity and disability. Inclusive practices will develop in our approach to learning, teaching and assessment practices, and institutional behaviours, so that our staff and students can make the most of access and opportunities.

RMIT will build upon its accreditation as an EOYWA Employer of Choice for Women. RMIT is a member of the Australian Network on Disability and Human Resources aims to work more closely with the Disability Liaison Unit to ensure an inclusive environment exists for staff as well as for students. Supporting student and staff health and wellbeing is a major priority for RMIT. Renewal of the Disability Action Plan is timely and will be informed by the Strategic and enabling plans 2011–15.
Goal 1
Global in attitude, action and presence, offering our students a global passport to learning and work

Priority 1
Ensure that educational disadvantage is not a barrier to access and opportunity. We will do through systemic approaches to engagement, access, transition and success, that ensures difference and diversity are represented in our global student body.

Priority 2
Ensure RMIT identifies high quality candidates through global searches, and that skills can be applied in a global context.

Priority 3
RMIT utilise the expertise of senior leaders to identify the best in field globally.

Priority 4
Enhance industry engagement, collaboration and development through mutually beneficial staff and student exchanges and staff secondments across global campuses.

Priority 5
Encourage a highly adaptive workforce and student experience that enables RMIT’s Global Strategy through improved understanding of diversity and inclusion.

Enablers of Goal 1
1. Maximise opportunities for global mobility in education and careers through financial support, mentoring and industry engagement.
   (For example, global mobility scholarships that recognise cohorts such Schools Network Access Program (SNAP), rural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, explicit careers development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, first in family, immigrant etc.)
2. Articulate the principles of equity and social inclusion in the selection and access of transnational students.
   (For example, develop an equity principle in the selection of transnational students that is different from the domestic policy, and responsive to the particular partnership and governance arrangements and market.)
3. Make explicit and support the tertiary pathways and preparation for domestic Australian students from non-English speaking backgrounds, where English language skills would pose a barrier to success, addressing specifically the Australian migrant and low SES populations of cities.
   (For example, targeted publications, clearer pathways and mapping of pathways and credit, information sessions for parents about tertiary study and professional outcomes delivered in geographically discrete locations across metropolitan Melbourne.)
4. Grow embedded and sustainable learning support and academic literacies delivery informed by data and analysis of cohort trends, increasing the retention and success of low SES and NESB students.
5. Develop innovative recruitment approaches for global searches.
6. Strengthen global mobility and relocation support and provisions to ensure we are positioned competitively to attract and secure quality candidates.
7. Implement recruitment processes that are consistent regardless of location to ensure a highly talented and diverse staff population.
8. Continue to offer and develop further training to all staff on the value of inclusion and cultural diversity—working within a global and culturally diverse environment.
9. Maximise opportunities for global mobility of staff, whilst ensuring staff well being and safety.
Goal 2

Urban in orientation and creativity, shaping sustainable cities and drawing inspiration from the challenges and opportunities they provide

Priority 1
Refine and consolidate partnership activities and engagements within a distinct social inclusion footprint focusing on the north, west and south east of metropolitan Melbourne and East Gippsland.

Priority 2
Grow the I Belong project as a significant partnership activity, bringing secondary students from disadvantaged schools into the city for distinct applied learning exploration of the city, of industry and the professions aligned with RMIT’s key fields and disciplines. Build interest, connection and aspiration through the opportunities and potential for employment embodied in cities.

Priority 3
Focus scholarship growth and accommodation support on cohorts for whom access to urban education has additional barriers.

Priority 4
Ensure that opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are prioritised in all outreach and engagement work. Grow access opportunities and student outcomes across RMIT’s disciplines and levels of study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, implementing RMIT’s Statement on Reconciliation.

Enablers of Goal 2

1. Refine the SNAP program model to simplify the access mechanisms and deepen and widen targeted engagement. Deliver preparation and aspiration centred activities that stimulate demand, unpack RMIT’s distinctive programs and disciplines and broaden opportunity.

(For example, simplified access mechanism, renewed focus on engagement, development of a partnership service model, and stronger alignment of RMIT activities—VET in Schools, discipline and taster activities, recruitment and marketing—within the SNAP footprint.)

2. Develop the I Belong project as a distinctly urban experience, focusing on a youth experience of applied learning opportunities and city experience for students from disadvantaged schools and communities. Grow internal partnerships and collaboration between the Academic Colleges, University Engagement and Equity and Diversity to develop and deliver a consistent suite of engagement activities informed by key disciplines and industries, shaped by the urban potential. Explore the potential for adult second chance learners.

(For example, develop curriculum and program modules for implementation 2011–15 for 1000 middle-year students per annum on campus for taster and city exploration activities aligned to pathways to and between programs and RMIT’s distinctive position as a University of technology and design.)

3. Build resource connections and linkages with distinct urban entities and professions to support I Belong and the aspiration, industry exploration and access opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

(For example, Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), Metlink, Melbourne Museum, the National Trust, the State Library, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Immigration Museum, SYNFMM, RMITV, professional and industry associations, RMIT’s alumni community.)

4. Develop a youth framework and adult second chance learner framework focusing on articulating pathways and access opportunities for people from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, and linked to discipline and program strengths, professional careers and preparation for education and employment. Develop a joined-up approach to youth and adult second chance learner pathways and access across the service and academic groups of the University.

(For example, alignment of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools and access pathways, build information and access bridges from community-based ACFE delivery to para-professional and professional education and training opportunities, preparation and industry exploration and access resources. Align equity access opportunities within Apply Direct to broaden potential for application and access. Increase the pathways and progressions from VET to Higher Education (HE) and from undergraduate to postgraduate study of students who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.)
Goal 3

Connected through active partnerships with professions, industries and organisations to support the quality, reach and impact of our education and research

Priority 1
Develop our capacity to speak to educational opportunity through the lens of disciplines, professions and industry outcomes, building a story of (and real access to) pathways and outcomes for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds across preparatory, undergraduate, postgraduate and research cohorts.

Priority 2
Build stronger links and partnerships with organisations and programs that provide cohort and industry mentoring for disadvantaged learners to maximise opportunities for success.

Priority 3
Develop mechanisms, and use the Program Annual Review (PAR) process, to understand cohort patterns of access, retention, progression and success, to support learning and teaching, inclusive curriculum, preparation and embedded academic literacies programs. Develop statements of ‘inherent requirements’ informed by discipline and industry requirements to support informed student choice and outcomes.

Priority 4
Develop a framework to support and encourage student diversity and the progression of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in research, implementing an embedded approach to application, access and transition for research cohorts.

Priority 5
Ensure the University identifies opportunities to attract and retain talented staff and students from diverse backgrounds and provides a supportive organisational culture where social inclusion and diversity is valued.

Enablers of Goal 3

1. Expand partnerships within the SNAP footprint that develop cohort specific social and educational capital that underpins academic retention and success.
2. Develop an alumni mentoring scheme linking disadvantaged learners with alumni matched by industry, harnessing the eagerness and experience of alumni to mentor students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their industry and occupational areas to strengthen academic and employment outcomes.
3. Develop a coherent suite of transition resources that add value to discipline and program delivery, support early preparation and transition, enhance the student experience, and build tertiary skills and academic literacies.
4. Advance the inclusion of equity cohort consideration in access to research places and scholarships, focusing on growing the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with a disability and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Interrogate the data for the development of a response to gender-related patterns of participation and representation, particularly involving the impact of carer and family responsibilities on research careers.
5. Build a university culture where both students and staff demonstrate respect and tolerance in their behaviour to others so that the University is experienced as a safe place where diversity is valued.
6. Build upon membership of the Australian Network on Disability. Renew the Disability Action Plan to reflect the Strategic and enabling plans of the University. Pilot the development of ‘inherent requirement’ statements for programs in consultation with industry, supporting student clarity around informed choice in program selection and professional requirements.
7. Develop and implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2012 to 2015. Implement the Wurreker Strategy, and grow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research candidates with explicit support for potential academic careers.
9. Build upon EOWA Employer of Choice for Women status to encourage RMIT as a destination of choice.
10. Enhance arrangements to support parents to return to work and study including the provision of on-campus childcare.
Key Internal And External Drivers that Inform our Equity and Social Inclusion Effort Are:

1. Federal participation and attainment targets and specific institutional targets set in the Compact Agreement for low SES and NESB cohorts
2. Commonwealth and Victorian Government targets for tertiary participation and attainment in response to skill and labour market participation needs
3. Student demand driven and contestable funding systems in the new tertiary space
4. The expansion of transnational education and globally mobile staff and student populations
5. Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program opportunities to widen and deepen systemic engagement opportunities for disadvantaged cohorts
6. The National Indigenous Higher Education Workforce Strategy, which shapes and influences RMIT’s approach to deliver real outcomes
7. The Wurreker Strategy (State Government) and Indigenous Education Program (Federal Government), drivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation
8. Universities Australia’s Strategy for Women 2011–14 (in which RMIT is a key partner), which supports the recruitment and employment of women across the University
9. The Australian Technology Network Women’s Executive Development Programs, offering opportunities to strengthen the involvement of senior women at the University.

The values of the Strategic Plan—creative, connected, fair, passionate and committed to making a difference—drive the Equity and Social Inclusion Plan. Each of these values has resonance for programs, activities and systems that engender social inclusion and ensures diversity in the staff and student body.

In particular:
- RMIT creates learning opportunities for students and staff to explore, test and fulfil their potential.
- Learning opportunities support a diverse range of students, including those who may be disadvantaged.
- Respect for Indigenous cultures is reflected in our work.
- A physically, culturally and socially safe work and study environment is provided for all staff and students.
- Cultural and social diversity is encouraged and celebrated.
- Knowledge and skills developed in our students and staff serve the needs of and bring benefits to individuals, cities, industries and nations.
University Performance Categories and Targets

Performance Category 1: Participation and Social Inclusion

Performance indicator 1A: Proportion of domestic undergraduates who are from a low SES background.

Baseline for improvement target: 15.63% (Current performance: 2009 data)

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<td>Improvement target</td>
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*Note: This target is above the excellence level for the first Compact period.

Performance indicator 1B: Proportion of domestic undergraduate students who are from a non-English speaking background.

Baseline for improvement target: 4.97% (Average of 2008–9 data)

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<td>Improvement target</td>
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